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Practices of Naming and the Possibilities of Home on American Zulu Mission Stations in Colonial Natal

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Early in the spring of 1846, a young man named Nembula and a young woman called Mfazimuni came to the American missionary church at Amanzimtoti in Natal, run by Newton Adams, to be married by Christian rites. Both of their families included early converts in the American Zulu Mission (AZM) of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The groom had been living on Adams' station for a decade with his mother Mbalasi, widow of the Makhanya chief Duze whom the Zulu leader Shaka ka Senzangakhona had reputedly killed. Two months before the wedding, Mbalasi had become Adams' first convert. Two years after the wedding, the bride's brother would become a founding member of the American Board church at Inanda. Nembula and Mfazimuni had met as students at an American day school, and their union marked an early triumph for the mission, the first to begin evangelising north and south of Port Natal.

But this was not the couple's first wedding. Nembula was already living with Mfazimuni and a second wife at Amanzimtoti at the time of his mother's baptism, and his Christian marriage to Mfazimuni entailed a concomitant desertion of his other partner. Their wedding at Adams' church was also a double ceremony, as another man married one of his two wives and left the other that day. Newton Adams comforted the grooms' former wives, while his wife prepared coffee and cake for the wedding reception. A few African women partook in the celebration, likely clad in the calico dresses that congregants usually borrowed upon entering their church and left with them at the door when they departed. Around the station, men and women murmured about and, in some cases, disparaged this surreal enactment of New England nuptial respectability on the south coast of Natal.

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In May 1847, Nembula and Mfazimuni returned to Adams' church to be baptised as the station's second and third converts. This time, instead of reconfiguring their household, they changed their names. Nembula Makhanya became Ira Adams Nembula and his wife became Laura – taking the names of Adams' brother and sister, who lived in New York and would never meet their namesakes.³

Like the double wedding in which they had affirmed their monogamy, Nembula and Mfazimuni's baptism was ironic and not unique within the world of the American Board. In the years after this naming ceremony, the "Nembulas" became a prominent *kholwa* lineage. The bride's brother would head another Christian family line under the name George Champion, after an American missionary who had adopted him as a boy. And when the African George Champion became a founding member of the Inanda church, he joined another African man named Joel Hawes. Born Mbambela Goba, Hawes had been baptised by missionary Daniel Lindley after the New England preacher who had presided over his own marriage.

Similar baptismal stories proliferate throughout the prodigious collection of correspondence that American evangelicals have left on their work in southern Africa, which began in 1835 and continues today in partnership with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. But scholars of African Christian communities in Natal and in southern Africa more broadly have paid remarkably little attention to the politics of naming at play in forging these communities. This presents a critical lacuna within a body of scholarship that has demonstrated the salience of other familial practices in naturalising missionary authority and fueling resistance in colonial southern Africa and elsewhere. Why were nineteenth-century missionaries so keen to baptise their early converts with names that were not just Christian or English, but were more pointedly their names, or those of their American kin, kith, and supporters? And what were the meanings that such names bore for the men and

³ On the foregoing experiences, see Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: African Missions Records (ABC) 15.4 4, Newton Adams, Amanzimtoti, to Rufus Anderson, Secretary, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Boston, 1 October 1847. See also *The Missionary Herald* 43, no. 5, "Letter from Mr. Bryant, September 28, 1846," May 1847; M. W. Swanson, *The Views of Mahlathi: Writings of A. W. G. Champion, a Black South African, with a Biography of A. W. G. Champion by R. R. R. Dhlomo* (Durban: Killie Campbell Africana Library, 1982), 59; and Ross Shiels, "Newton Adams, 1835–1851" (unpublished Honours thesis, University of Natal, 1963), 29–30.

women who claimed them? How did these meanings change over time, and what do such transformations suggest about the ties sustaining African Christian communities?

We submit that practices of renaming comprised processes of flexible home-making within a landscape of profound social flux. Missionaries named their converts after themselves or their kith or kin both to assert their paternal or maternal authority over these converts and to inscribe themselves within the tenuous mission station communities that made up a broader evangelical empire. From the devastations of war, dislocations of migration, and displacements of conversion, early converts Nembula Makhanya/Ira Adams Nembula and Mbambela Goba/Joel Hawes took on their baptismal names to claim access to the affective and productive resources within these uncertain station communities. They would also use these names to head new lineages as patriarchs of *kholwa* families. But from the mid-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, these men and their descendants did not only use their Christian names. In different contexts, they would use their baptismal names, their *izibongo* (clan names), and other names seeped in historical and contemporary meaning to assert their claims to multiple networks of social belonging.

Mission Station Home-Making and the Politics of Naming

The remaking of converts' homes and family lives was integral to the work of many evangelicals in their own societies and in mission fields around the globe from the early nineteenth century down to the mid-twentieth century, as scholars have extensively demonstrated.⁴ In southern Africa, two of the loudest exponents of domestic renovations were British and American missionaries of two non-denominational but Congregationalist-oriented groups: the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the American Board.

⁴ See, for instance, Dana L. Robert, "The 'Christian Home' as a Cornerstone of Anglo-American Missionary Thought and Practice," in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 134–165; Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa," 37–74, and Nancy Rose Hunt, "Colonial Fairy Tales and the Knife and Fork Doctrine in the Heart of Africa," 143–171, both in Karen Tranberg Hansen, ed., *African Encounters with Domesticity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); and John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, "Mansions of the Lord: Architecture, Interiority, Domesticity," in *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 274–322.

John Philip of the LMS reflected amidst his efforts to evangelise the Southern Tswana in 1828 that “the private and domestic situation of mankind is the chief circumstance which forms their character”. He thus considered the “domestic character of a people” an indication of their spiritual state.⁵ In light of their intertwined understandings of domestic space, familial relations, and Christianity, Philip and his colleagues sought to transform Tswana modes of home-making in every sense of the term. As Jean and John Comaroff have explored, the LMS and other Nonconformist British missions to the Tswana sought to cultivate monogamous, nuclear families, residing in square houses – the rooms of which would sharply delineate space to demarcate new gendered and generational divisions of labour. These houses would line the streets of mission stations, surrounding the model Christian home of the resident missionaries themselves.⁶

Philip was the man who initially encouraged the Americans to set out for Natal. He claimed that Dingane’s and Mzilikazi’s subjects resided in centralised societies in which private family life in bourgeois Protestant terms was impossible. “Every acre of land, every head of cattle, and every man, woman, and child in the country are the property of the king,” Philip said of Mzilikazi’s domain. “With some little variation the same practice is said to obtain among the Zoolahs under Dingaan. Whether the Zoolahs have improved upon the Mohammedan paradise, or whether Mohammed borrowed his ideas on that subject from the ancestors of the Zoolahs, it may be difficult to determine.”⁷

But the highly organised societies of southeastern Africa appealed to the Americans because they sought to evangelise nations along the western and southern African littoral, whose members would then lead missions into the interior. Upon their arrival in 1835, the Americans in fact hoped to convert all of Dingane’s and Mzilikazi’s subjects in one generation. But the planned American mission to Mzilikazi’s Ndebele failed, and the missionaries were also unable to accomplish much amidst the political chaos of Natal in the

⁵ Cited in Comaroff and Comaroff, “Mansions of the Lord,” 275.

⁶ See Comaroff and Comaroff, “Mansions of the Lord” and “Home-Made Hegemony” in *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁷ The Missionary Herald 29, no. 11, “Extracts of a Letter of the Rev. Dr. Philip, of the London Missionary Society,” November 1833, 415–416.

1830s and 1840s, as Norman Etherington has detailed.⁸ Where mission stations were established, Americans were generally unable to sustain interest beyond initial curiosity in most African communities, as conversion and its cultural trappings demanded ontological transformations that few were willing to make. Polygynous, extended homesteads comprised the fundamental social, spiritual, and economic bases of African societies in the region. Missionaries demanded that their converts transform, or break with, kin and ancestors that sustained these homesteads to enter into new and uncertain communities predicated on connection to a new and uncertain god.

Christianity thus appeared inviting only to those with few other options. Prominent among these desperate early converts were Mbalasi and another royal widow, Mayembe. Early in 1849, Mayembe came to the American Board's Mzinyathi mission station to evade an *ukungena* (levirate) marriage to the brother of her late husband, the Qadi Chief, Dube. The Qadi, a subordinate chiefdom within the Ngcobo paramountcy of the Thukela valley, had been one of the first chiefdoms that Shaka had incorporated into the Zulu state in the late 1810s and had weathered Zulu state expansion over the next two decades. Then in 1837, Shaka's successor Dingane murdered Chief Dube and a number of his subjects, prompting the Qadi people's departure south to Port Natal under the leadership of Dube's son, Dabeka, who died the next year in an expedition against the Zulu. They settled at Inanda, where American Board missionaries Daniel and Lucy Lindley began a mission station in 1847. Here, in 1849, the royal widow Mayembe became Dalida Dube, matriarch of an elite *kholwa* line.⁹

Dalida Dube's son Ukakonina, who had come with his mother to Inanda as a young man, was baptised James Dube and studied in the home of Inanda missionary Daniel Lindley,

⁸ See Norman Etherington, "An American Errand into the South African Wilderness," *Church History* 39 (1970): 62–71; and Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants, and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835–1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland, and Zululand* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978).

⁹ See Heather Hughes, "Politics and Society in Inanda, Natal: The Qadi under Chief Mqhawe, c.1840–1906" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1995), 52–80 and 151; and Hughes, "Doubly Elite: Exploring the Life of John Langalibalele Dube," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 2001), 445–458: 449–451. Interestingly, Hughes notes that Dalida's son James Dube "never engaged in the practice, so common in early convert communities, of naming children after missionaries." Hughes suggests that his choice of names like "John Langalibalele Dube"—after an indigenous leader at odds with colonial authority—and "Africa" reflected the Dubes' proud claims to Qadi royalty, which John Dube mobilized politically in the early twentieth century. See Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2011), 16–17 and 20–21.

who taught with his wife Lucy and their eleven children.¹⁰ Newton Adams was the earliest to use this “family system,” rooted in such “family schools”; in the late 1830s, he had even paid some parents to keep their children in his home, where they worked and learned to read.¹¹ This family system was integral to the Protestant missionary enterprise. After all, marriage was mandatory for the first generation of American Zulu Mission appointees, as it was for ministers throughout the American Board’s mission fields.¹² This policy not only sought to present missionary families as models for converts to emulate, but also sustained the gendered and racialised divisions of labour on which the mission community was based. American women were expected to concentrate their work on women and children. From the 1840s through the 1860s, *amakholwa* learned to read, write and pray, and laboured in missionaries’ homes; from these “family schools,” missionaries hoped they would marry and form their own model Christian families, whose example and services would perpetuate their work.¹³

On mission stations founded upon missionaries’ paternalistic and maternalistic relationships with their converts, within communities that offered a “substitute patriarchy”¹⁴ to the widows and other precariously-located women and men who first came to them, Christian names operated both to fix *kholwa* identities within the new world of the mission station and to locate their baptisms within the broader evangelical empire of which they were now part. The renaming of Nguzana Mngadi as Rufus Anderson illustrates this dual function pointedly. Nguzana had been baptised by Henry Bridgman, in whose home he began his Christian education. Bridgman named his protégé after American Board Secretary Rufus Anderson, the Board’s leading advocate of education for “native agency” – the training of a local clergy to assume authority as soon as supervising American reverends were certain they

¹⁰ See Hughes, “Doubly Elite,” 449–450; and Edwin W. Smith, *The Life and Times of Daniel Lindley, 1801–1880* (London: The Epworth Press, 1949), 281. James Dube used his baptismal name “in his Christian life”, and in his links with the Qadi chiefdom, he continued to be known as Ukakonina. (Hughes, *First President*, 12).

¹¹ See Myra Dinnerstein, “The American Zulu Mission in the Nineteenth Century: Clash over Customs,” *Church History* 45, no. 2 (June 1976): 235–246, p. 236; and William Ireland, *Jubilee of the American Mission in Natal, 1835–1885* (Horne, 1886), 42. See also Sheila Meintjes, “Family and Gender in the Christian Community at Edendale, Natal, in Colonial Times,” in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cherryl Walker, 125–145: 129–133.

¹² See Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 5–7.

¹³ See Meghan Elisabeth Healy, “‘Like a Family’: Global Models, Familial Bonds, and the Making of an American School for Zulu Girls,” *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 11, no. 3 (July 2010): 279–300.

¹⁴ Benedict Carton uses this term to describe mission stations in the late nineteenth century, but it aptly describes this foundational period as well. See Carton, *Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 72.

would not “backslide” into “heathenism”.¹⁵ While empowering in theory, education for “native agency” was profoundly paternalistic in practice; African ordination had been a long time coming in Natal, and it would remain limited through the turn of the century. In 1870 – three and a half decades into the Americans’ mission – the African Rufus Anderson would in fact become the first black man ordained in the American Zulu Mission. Seven years later, missionaries would expel him from the church for adultery. But before his fall from grace, this first ordained minister’s Christian name supplied abundant narrative capital for missionary letters and periodicals – suggesting symbolic links between *amakholwa* and the Board’s supporters across the United States to encourage the continued support of the latter.¹⁶

Previous research on missionary domesticity in southern Africa, while it acknowledges missionaries’ assertions of authority in renaming, does not account for baptismal names’ larger role in sustaining this broader transnational public in which each of these small, generally struggling, stations played a part. The Comaroffs, for instance, devote only one page of their two-volume opus to personal naming practices on mission stations. In this brief discussion, they underscore baptismal renaming as “an evangelical refraction of the general tendency of imperialisms of all stripes to impose themselves by redesignating peoples and places; such is the illocutionary force of nomination in the (re)construction of reality – and personal status”.¹⁷ Simply put, they contend that Nonconformist missionaries sought to fix their converts by imposing Christian names as labels, employing names in the service of their broader project to reorganise social life in southern Africa. Our sources suggest that American Board missionaries were engaged in a similar project – but this was not their only goal in renaming, and nor may it have been the sole goal of their contemporaries. In giving converts names that were not only Christian but also deeply personal, missionaries sought to locate themselves and their converts in a hierarchical relation to one another, all to support a growing network of institutions that they termed their “benevolent empire”.¹⁸

From the mid-1860s, the mission elaborated its plans for domestic transformations in

¹⁵ See Paul William Harris, *Nothing But Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Foreign Missions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39–40.

¹⁶ See *The Missionary Herald* 66, no. 11, “Ordination of Native Pastors,” November 1870.

¹⁷ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 219.

¹⁸ On the “benevolent empire,” see Richard Elphick, “The Benevolent Empire and the Social Gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the Age of Segregation,” in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), 347–369: 348.

more formal institutions, with the expansion of Amanzimtoti Seminary to train young men as preachers and teachers and Inanda Seminary to cultivate young women as teachers and as their prospective partners. With the growing institutionalisation of the missionary enterprise in Natal came its feminisation. In 1869, the AZM appointed its first American woman, who was not related to any man in the field, Inanda Seminary's principal, Mary Edwards. The widowed Edwards' appointment would be followed by a deluge of single women in the AZM and elsewhere across the American Board.¹⁹ Like family schools and mission communities, these institutions were to be sustained by hierarchical, pseudo-familial divisions of labour between American and local men and women. But increasingly, these institutions were under the immediate charge of single American women, who assumed responsibilities hitherto available only to ordained American men but lacked similar voting privileges in mission structures and universally received less pay.²⁰

One position of authority that missionary women could assume, however, was the power to name. In 1878, an unmarried American woman named Fannie Morris came to Inanda to work with Mary Edwards, with whom she had a falling out shortly after her arrival. After struggling with the men of the mission to find a stable appointment for herself in the field, Morris agreed to take over the "kraal work" of making evangelical visits to women and children in the homesteads surrounding Inanda station. She took to this new task with an unseemly zeal to mother and to name the children she encountered. In July 1879, she related this zeal to her "dear young friends" in Boston – the readers of the children's supplement to *Life and Light for Heathen Women*, the publication of the Women's Board of Missions of the Congregationalist Churches. First, she introduced them to an infant named Mayizekanye, after a homestead of King Cetshwayo. The significance of this child's name in the immediate wake of the defeat of Cetshwayo's forces in the culminating Anglo-Zulu War battle of Ulundi seemed to elude Morris, who was encouraging Mayizekanye's mother to raise him to be a missionary. "I think we can persuade her to give it an English name when it is christened," Morris assured her readers. In the next breath, she introduced them to another child in whom she found more evangelical promise. Morris had first met this child a year before; she had reportedly been born the same day Morris arrived in Natal, and "as she had not yet been

¹⁹ By 1871, the men of the mission reported, rather uncomfortably, that there were fewer than a hundred American male ministers and fifty single female missionary appointees on their stations around the globe. See National Archives of South Africa, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, American Board Mission Collection (ABMC) D/1/90, "General Survey of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Presented at the Annual Meeting at Salem, October 3, 1871."

²⁰ On this context, see Healy, "Like a Family."

named, her father allowed me to give her a name. I called her Clara after one of my friends in America". Of Clara's home, Morris relates,

There was a fire in it and as we [Morris and her unnamed African assistant, or assistants] knew it would be full of smoke, we did not venture inside, but sat on a mat in the sun, which is not unpleasantly warm at this season of the year. Clara stood at my side and smiled very prettily at me but I could not get her to talk. When I started to go away her mother said, "There is your mother Clara, go with her"; but instead of coming she ran to her mother and put her arms around her. We all laughed at that and I said, "She does not care for but one mother, but I hope when she is a little older they will let her come and live with me. I would like to teach her English while she is young, so that she will be able to read English books. She can be much more useful if she has a thorough knowledge of English."²¹

A few months later, Morris confessed to the Women's Board, "I've been wanting a little girl ever since I came to Natal, but had almost given up finding one, for girls are property here" – blaming *lobola*, men's gifts of cattle to their bride's families, for this dearth of orphans.²²

Morris nonetheless managed to "adopt" an ill five-year-old whom she called Bessie and a disabled fourteen-year-old who called Morris her mother.²³ In 1880, Morris related to her supporter, Mrs. Hattie Cary that the elder girl "asked me the other night if I would not give her a Christian name and call her my child. 'For,' she said, 'I love you truly. I love you better than anyone else in the world.' I thought I would like to name her for you so I call her Hattie but will not add the Cary unless I receive permission from you."²⁴ Morris sent these girls and a third adoptee to school at Inanda, making for herself "quite a little family" as she attempted to educate new generations of African female assistants, on whose labour the mission's expansion relied.²⁵

Within the family system that prevailed amongst many married and single missionaries then, baptismal names operated as colonising labels as the Comaroffs construe them. But we contend that they also operated as what linguists have called "pointers" – names gesturing to the conditions of a child's birth.²⁶ Linguists tend to dichotomise Zulu

²¹ ABC 15.4 49, Fannie Morris, Inanda, to "My Dear Young Friends," Boston, 16 July 1879.

²² ABC 15.4 49, "Extracts from Miss Morris' Letter," Inanda, 16 November 1879.

²³ ABC 15.4 49, "Extracts from Miss Morris' Letter," Inanda, 16 November 1879.

²⁴ ABC 15.4 49, Morris, Inanda, to Hattie Cary, Boston, 23 April 1880.

²⁵ ABC 15.4 49, Morris, Inanda, to Hattie Cary, Boston, 23 April 1880.

²⁶ See Susan M. Suzman, "Names as Pointers: Zulu Personal Naming Practices," *Language in Society* 23, no. 2 (June 1994): 253–272; and Adrian Koopman, "Zulu Names," in Benedict Carton, John Laband, and Jabulani Sithole, eds., *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 439–448.

names as pointers – deeply rooted in naming practices within the homestead – and Christian names as labels – useful chiefly for school and bureaucratic purposes. But these naming stories suggest that, for missionaries at least, Christian names also operated as deeply symbolic pointers to histories in the making. In the transformation from “Mayizekanye” to a Christian name (such as “John Bunyan,” the name of a neighboring child that Morris met), both names acted as pointers by which those who named the child would remember the events surrounding his entrance into the world.²⁷

But how did these Zulu and Christian names also act as pointers for their bearers in colonial Natal? This is a more difficult question that scholars have not addressed anywhere in the region for the mid-nineteenth century. The Comaroffs and Heidi Gengenbach have suggested that bearers’ code-switching between their southern African and imported names comprised a mode of self-making and identity formation, a way of selectively remembering and forgetting, and a way to represent themselves on shifting colonial grounds. The Comaroffs state this claim without much empirical substantiation, while Gengenbach draws upon a series of late twentieth century life history interviews with Mozambican women.²⁸ To address this question on early American Board stations, we will turn now to the experiences of the Nembulas and the Hawes family – whose members have left telling traces of self-representation in state and missionary archives, and in the names and memories of their kin and descendants.

The Names of Nembula

Returning to the baptismal names given to Nembula and Mfazimuni in 1847, their renaming appears as one of many vivid manifestations of the family system and an act that attempted to position these two people firmly within a new institutional and familial narrative. From the missionaries’ position – and without caricaturing the missionary role in a scenario whose coercive or consensual aspects remain largely obscure in archival records – it is safe to say that this process was meant to involve an erasure of a particular past along with the renunciation of particular practices. However, in the story of the Nembulas, and for many

²⁷ See ABC 15.4 49, Fannie Morris, Inanda, to “My Dear Young Friends,” Boston, 16 July 1879.

²⁸ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Volume 1*, 219; and Heidi Gengenbach, “Naming the Past in a ‘Scattered’ Land: Memory and the Powers of Women’s Naming Practices in Southern Mozambique,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 523–542.

other *amakholwa*, such erasure simply was not possible. Ultimately, the Nembulas' names did not mark out a straightforward or one-dimensional route along which a new life could proceed. Rather, they had a distinctive flexibility, pointing toward both the past and the future.²⁹

First, it must be noted that Newton Adams' baptism of this young couple was not only an attempt to closely link them to the missionary family. It also had the direct consequence that Nembula and Mfazimuni's children had "Nembula" as their surname, rather than "Makhanya". The naming thus aimed to sever previous ties and to confirm Nembula as head of a "new" Christian lineage. In this respect, the naming of the Nembulas paralleled the avid naming practices that the Comaroffs have identified: in addition to baptismal names, Christian Tswana were given "family names," which were "derived [to serve bureaucratic requirements] from the eponymous heads of local agnatic descent groups".³⁰ As on Adams' mission station, after the new name(s) had been given, usage varied according to who was doing the addressing and in what setting.

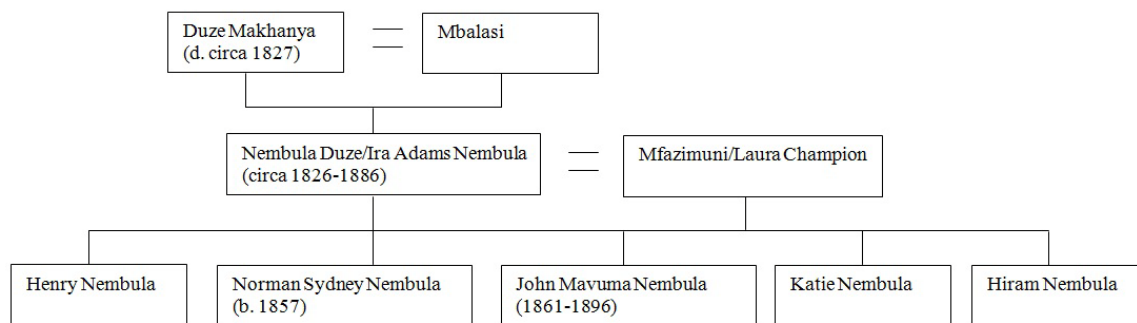
The full significance of this "founding" of a new lineage is not clear until viewed against the alliances and experiences of Nembula and his mother, before they met Adams. In 1837, when they first encountered him in the very early days of the mission, Nembula was about eight to ten years old. The mother and son were living south of Port Natal because they had moved there with other Makhanyas, within a section of the greater subsuming polity of the Qwabe. In about 1827 or 1828, the Makhanya chief Duze had been killed by Shaka. To escape Shaka's successor Dingane, shortly before 1832, the Qwabe chief Nqeto moved south with most of his subjects. These included people who called themselves Makhanya – Chief Duze's people. They survived by pillaging, and travelled a long way south to the Amampondo led by Faku. Nqeto was killed in the course of this journey, and sub-clans of the Qwabe (like the Makhanya), as well as the remnants of the Qwabe royal house itself, retraced their steps and ended up further north again, in Natal by the late 1830s. A group of people under the Makhanya chief Makutha established themselves "along the emaNzimtoti

²⁹ For a discussion of Nembula's pioneering sugar milling business, see Eva Jackson, "The Economic Experimentation of Nembula Duze/ Ira Adams Nembula, 1845–1886", in *Journal of Natal and Zulu History, History and Heritage: a special issue on former American Board mission stations in southern KwaZulu-Natal*, Vol. 28 (2010), 8–22.

³⁰ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Volume 1*, 219.

and ezimBokodweni rivers,” as A.T. Bryant maintains.³¹ They arrived around the same time that the Boers were making land claims in Natal, and as the American Board was establishing its earliest mission stations there. In the late 1830s, then, Mbalasi and Nembula lived near to several other widows and sons of the murdered Makhanya chief Duze.³²

Nembula/Makhanya Family Tree³³



The social standing of Mbalasi Makhanya (her seniority among Duze’s wives and her degree of security) is hard to ascertain from extant sources. It is also remains difficult to determine how Nembula ended up living and preaching with Adams. Alternate versions, including oral testimonies collected in the 1970s and current beliefs about Mbalasi amongst Makhanya family members, put forward a variety of scenarios: such as, that Mbalasi first brought him in as a small boy for medical treatment, or was herself sent by the Makhanya chief to work for Adams, or fled to the station to avoid a planned *ukungena*, or wanted to escape persecution by Duze’s other widows, or followed the call of God despite her son being

³¹ A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 188. Norman Etherington has criticised anthropologist-influenced accounts of “movements of tribes” which riddle writings on nineteenth-century African populations—an approach which is hard to avoid in rehearsing the background of the Amanzimtoti Makhanyas. However, this article in general focuses on the real links of family and personal connection that Etherington emphasises must supplant the limited, lifeless view of “peoples” or “homogenous communities” with unchanging ethnic loyalties and identities. See Norman Etherington, *The Great Treks: The Transformation of Southern Africa, 1815–1854* (New York: Longman, 2001), 344–346.

³² On this context, see D.H. Reader, *Zulu Tribe in Transition: The Makhanya of Southern Natal* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966).

³³ These dates for the members of the Nembula/Makhanya family were found in: PAR SNA I/1/104 94/1888, John Mavuma Nembula: application for exemption from Native Law; PAR SNA I/1/148 1205/1891, Norman Sidney Nembula: application for exemption from Native Law; PAR SNA I/1/115 543/1889, Hiram Nembula: request for new exemption papers; PAR SNA I/1/159 830/1892, Katie Nembula: application for exemption from Native Law. Nembula purportedly had ten children, but only the above names appear in the archives.

“next in line” to be chief.³⁴ Though we cannot be sure how this came about precisely, we do know that his inheritance as a son of the Makhanya chief remained important to Nembula.

We can say this because in 1864, numerous Christian converts, men from mission stations all over Natal and of various denominations, supported a petition to be sent to Natal’s Secretary for Native Affairs. These men signed their names in protest at the confusing, inefficient dual legal system, in which “native law” as yet remained uncoded and by which black Christians felt marginalised and unrecognised despite the changes they had made in their lives. Theophilus Shepstone established a means by which black Natalians could gain exemption from customary law in Law 11 of 1864, but he made no provision for collective exemptions, frustrating the wishes of these petitioners. Beside the names of many Christians whom Nembula knew well – including James Dube, Msingaphansi (Nyuswa) of Imfume, Benjamin Hawes, Magema Magwaza, Udhlonono, Jonathan Ngidi, John Mavuma, George Champyana [Champion], and Joel Hawes – he signed himself “Nembula Duze”. In this manner, Nembula Makhanya/Nembula Duze/Ira Adams Nembula invoked a royal heritage – confirming his link to Qwabe nobility and placing himself in a similar bracket to James Dube, who was known by name and reputation to be a Qadi prince.³⁵ His three eldest sons were baptized with the Nembula surname: Henry Nembula, Norman Sydney Nembula, and John Mavuma Nembula. These were the names they used to refer to themselves and each other in official colonial documentation and correspondence.³⁶

It is worth noting that Nembula and Mfazimuni/Laura’s youngest son, born around 1860, was named after one of the very earliest charter members at Inanda mission station: an elderly man who had been baptised “John Mavuma” at Inanda in the late 1840s when the AZM was still securing itself. The divergent lives of the young man and his namesake are striking. John Mavuma was a former soldier in Shaka’s and Dingane’s armies who had traveled a long way to come to Mzinyathi, escaping assassination.³⁷ The young John Mavuma Nembula born to Nembula and Mfazimuni became a translator and teacher, and in

³⁴ See Myra Dinnerstein, “The American Board Mission to the Zulu, 1835–1900” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1971), 41; Campbell Collections, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, Nembula Papers (NP) “Steel Drawers” 8639, Ephraim Nembula to Killie Campbell, c.1940; NP 25796, P. Lawrence Khanyile to Killie Campbell, 13 September, 1957; and Eva Jackson, interview with N. Makhanya, Durban, 28 November 2007.

³⁵ See Heather Hughes, “Doubly Elite.”

³⁶ See applications for exemption from Native Law: PAR SNA I/1/104 94/1888, John Mavuma Nembula; and PAR SNA I/1/148 1205/1891, Norman Sidney Nembula. See also PAR MSCE O 38/190, Death notice of Nomavivi Nembula (surviving spouse, Norman Nembula), 1910.

³⁷ See Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics*.

1882 he travelled to the United States with Reverend Stephen Pixley to work on the isiZulu translation of the Bible. There he enrolled in Oberlin College, and subsequently studied at Chicago Medical College, graduating in 1887; returning to Natal as the first black man in the colony, and the second in the region, to receive a medical qualification.³⁸

Mission stations were built upon the histories of their occupants, whether or not these histories were acknowledged within the overt discourse of the stations themselves or endorsed as parts of their institutional narratives. Nembula Duze was baptised with the name of Adams' American brother in 1847. However, the name he himself used emphasized his place in a line of chiefs, which was an integral part of him whether he was on a mission station or outside of it. Like James Dube and then John Langalibalele Dube, this heritage was important in straddling a key divide between two (interconnected but profoundly contrasting) social worlds.

Joel Hawes, Lindley Daniel Hawes, and the Gobas

Mbambela Goba/Joel Hawes did not come from royal heritage, and little is known about his origins. We do know that he was a charter member of the Inanda church, to which he had come from Egcalabeni in the late 1840s following Dalida Dube, the widow of his Qadi chief.³⁹ He was well into middle age by then, with a wife and two adult sons, all of whom joined their father at Inanda. In the 1850s, his son Thomas Hawes was in his twenties and working as Lucy Lindley's servant while studying with Daniel Lindley; by 1870, Thomas Hawes had emerged as "the best preacher we have" in the Home Missionary Society, in Daniel Lindley's estimation.⁴⁰ In the early 1870s, Thomas Hawes would take Esidumbini station over from its American pastor, while shortly thereafter his brother Benjamin would become the fourth ordained African in the AZM.

Like the African Rufus Anderson, Joel Hawes fell into disgrace with the mission for taking a second wife, but he "repented deeply" and was by the time of his 1897 death

³⁸ See Robert Vinson and Robert Edgar, "Zulus, African Americans and the African Diaspora," in Benedict Carton, John Laband, and Jabulani Sithole, eds., *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 240–249. P. 243.

³⁹ See Smith, 283; Hughes, "Politics and Society," 165.

⁴⁰ Daniel Lindley, circa 1870, quoted in Smith, 401.

canonised as a model early convert.⁴¹ Interestingly, with this second wife, Joel Hawes had a son in 1863 whom he named Allsop Johannes Hawes Goba, and whose descendants would bear the name Goba, rather than Hawes – thus using their *isibongo* rather than their Christian family name or their patronym.⁴² We have not found references to this third son in Board papers, but family records reveal that Allsop Goba married under Christian rites in the early twentieth century.⁴³

This union and its offspring notwithstanding, American missionaries held Thomas and Benjamin Hawes up as model Christians in their letters home from the 1850s through the 1870s, and their father's namesake did not escape observation: "Reverend Benjamin Hawes, son of Joel Hawes (named after the distinguished Hartford minister of that name), continues to blow the gospel trumpet," as one report in *The Missionary Herald* put it.⁴⁴ In turn, Thomas and Benjamin Hawes employed several missionary references in their children's names: Thomas had his first son, Aaron Joel Hawes, in 1860, another son named Lindley Daniel Mmango Hawes the next year, and a daughter named Talitha Hawes the following year.⁴⁵ Talitha Hawes may have been named in honor of Dalida Dube.⁴⁶ Benjamin named his sons Alden Grout Hawes, Daniel David Rood Hawes, and Samuel David Marsh Hawes, all after American missionaries.⁴⁷

Many of Joel Hawes' descendants, however, would not retain their American surnames. Thomas Hawes appeared in state archives as such through 1897, but his 1921 death notice identifies him as "Goba, Thomas (alias Hawes)".⁴⁸ Of Thomas' ten children, only four retained Hawes as a surname: Talitha Hawes, Lindley Daniel Mmango Hawes, Levi

⁴¹ *The Missionary Herald* 93, no. 10, "Zulu Mission: The Church at Lindley," October 1897, p. 394.

⁴² Andile Hawes, "Uzalo luka Joel Hawes Goba" ["Descendents of Joel Hawes Goba"], genealogical research based on family papers, memory, and state archives. In possession of Meghan Healy.

⁴³ Andile Hawes, "Uzalo luka Joel Hawes Goba."

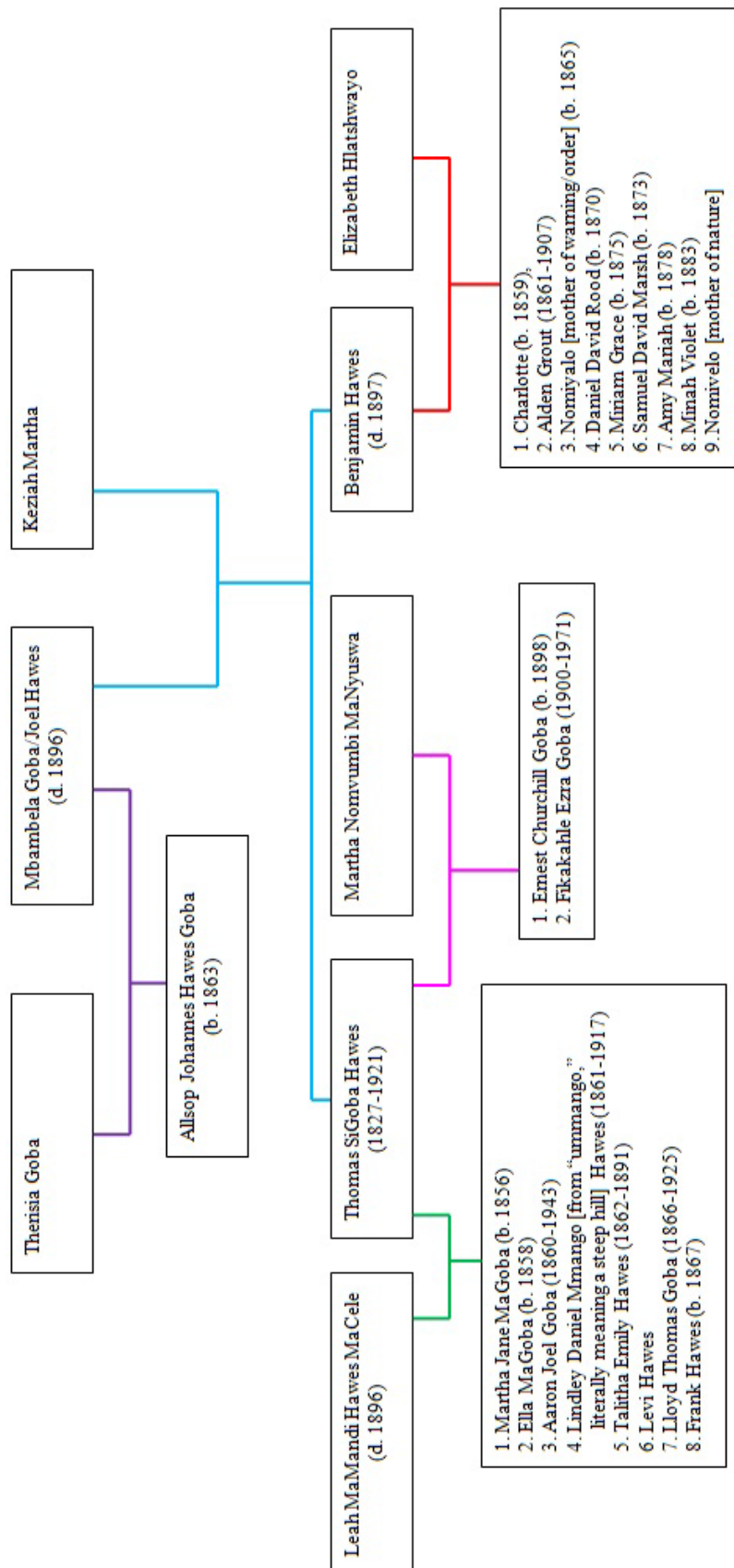
⁴⁴ *The Missionary Herald* 70, no. 7, "Pleasant Indications – Education – the Native Ministry," July 1874, 217.

⁴⁵ Talitha Hawes' first name is elsewhere variously spelled, but this reflects how she signed her name on official papers as an adult. See National Archives of South Africa, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, Master of the Supreme Court, Estates Records (MSCE) 12298/12304 12299, "Estate of the Late Talitha Emily Hawes," 10 June 1927.

⁴⁶ See Hughes, 12. Dalida was an Old Testament name that several other Inanda girls born in the latter half of the nineteenth century also received.

⁴⁷ Andile Hawes, "Uzalo luka Joel Hawes Goba."

⁴⁸ MSCE 8107/1921, "Death Notice of Thomas Goba (Alias Hawes)," 10 November 1921.

Goba/Hawes Goba/Hawes Family Tree: Adapted from “Uzalo luka Joel Hawes Goba,” by Andile Hawes

Hawes, and Frank Hawes.⁴⁹ His other two daughters married as MaGoba, while his other four sons raised their families as Gobas.

What was going on amongst Thomas' children? At first glance, this transition from Hawes to Goba seems to comprise an act of protest against the paternalistic structures of the American Board, an assertion of *kholwa* connection with their *izibongo* and thus their heritage prior to conversion. It may well have comprised of such an act for some who called themselves Goba, although we cannot know this from the limited extant information. But in interviews with both the Hawes and Goba sides of his family and through research in state archives, Andile Hawes, a great-grandson of Lindley Hawes born in 1956, has suggested why his great-grandfather may have chosen to be identified by the Hawes name. The answer is not his unswerving loyalty to the American Board church.

Instead, Andile Hawes has identified a family split in the 1890s, rooted in Lindley Hawes' conversion to the Anglican church, after he accepted a job at an Anglican school. After rising to the post of principal there, Lindley left to become a court interpreter in Umzimkulu.⁵⁰ In a March 2009 interview with Meghan Healy and Jeff Guy, Andile Hawes described Lindley's descendants as "like outcasts" on account of this conversion: Lindley's family was cut out of Thomas' will. But Lindley attained prominence as a court interpreter, establishing a distinguished Hawes lineage of his own.⁵¹

Andile Hawes' parents also gave his brother the middle name Lindley and his sister the first name Thalitha, prompting Healy to inquire whether, growing up, Andile Hawes had had a sense of where these names came from. As a child, Hawes said, "I never bothered. It's only now, as I'm older – now, if you look at the family names upon the death of Thomas – if you look at all their names, they were related to missionaries who were close to them ... I remember my brother was so frustrated, he wanted to change back, and I had to explain what it means". At the same time that Hawes suggests these names functioned primarily as "labels" in his childhood, his ongoing work to understand their meanings reveals the continued symbolic salience of names as "pointers" within the Hawes/Goba family. He sees

⁴⁹ Andile Hawes, "Uzalo luka Joel Hawes Goba."

⁵⁰ See National Archives of South Africa, Cape Town, MOOC 6/9/887 1269, "Lindley Daniel Hawes, Estate Papers."

⁵¹ Meghan Healy with Jeff Guy, interview with Andile Hawes, conducted at Inanda Seminary, 21 March 2009. Transcript archived at Inanda Seminary and the Campbell Collections, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

his exhaustive genealogical research as a project of reclaiming a past made up of both dramatic changes and striking continuities:

One thing I found was, when I was born, my grandfather, when he looked at me, he said, “This child looks like old people”. And I’ve proven that. That’s why I’ve left my beard. Because I’ve found that I can go anywhere in South Africa, and if you’re a Goba, you associate me with this beard ... There is a family in Joburg who have actually given me their grandfather’s picture, and exactly this beard – because when they saw me, they said, “No, you look like our grandfather”. Hey, they are Gobas, but they don’t know where they come from. So I am helping them to trace their root person in Natal.

Hawes suspects that amakholwa rejected their *izibongo* because “they didn’t want to be associated with those ancestors, because they had chosen a new life”.⁵² More than a century and a half after Mbambela Goba became Joel Hawes, his descendant is retracing these histories of connection and disconnection, of remembering and forgetting – of the politics of naming.

Conclusion

Scholars of naming practices in other colonial contexts have boldly argued that naming “ultimately reflects the power to conquer and control,” as “the power to name becomes the power to define one’s identity and very existence”.⁵³ Our exploration of the politics of naming on AZM stations suggests that personal renamings were more complicated than this in colonial Natal. Indeed, missionaries like Fannie Morris sought to rename their potential converts in order to effect utter epistemological transformations in their consciousness and conduct. But the results of missionaries’ exertions of power were uneven. In taking on names that resonated within kholwa and chiefly contexts, Nembula Makhanya/Nembula Duze/Ira Adams Nembula asserted his claims to belonging within multiple networks; his names were pointers to a multivalent past and future. And Goba/Hawes family members’ uses of their surnames reveal how missionary names took on a life of their own within amakholwa families. Ultimately, this paper urges historians of colonial Natal to follow Andile Hawes’ lead in exploring how names have served as flexible labels and multidirectional pointers. Names have enabled their bearers to move toward and

⁵² Healy and Guy, interview with Andile Hawes.

⁵³ David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xl. Such analysis draws significantly upon Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1994).

away from kin and kith, engaging changing affiliations to endure the vicissitudes of *kholwa* life.